THE

NATURE and DESIGN

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

EXTRACTED from a late AUTHOR.

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THE
NATURE and DESIGN, &c.

1. THE Wiſdom of Mankind has for ſeveral Ages been enquiring into the Nature of Man, and the Nature of the World in which he is placed. The Wants and Miſeries of human Nature, and the Vanity of worldly Enjoyments, have made it difficult for the wiſeſt Men to tell, what human Happineſs was, or wherein it conſiſted.

It has pleaſed the infinite Goodneſs of GOD to ſatisfy our Enquiries, by a Revelation made to the World by his Son JESUS CHRIST.

This Revelation has laid open the great Secrets of Providence from the Foundation of the World. It has explained the preſent State of Things, and given Man all the Information that is neceſſary, both to give him Reſt here, and to lead him ſafely to everlaſting Happineſs.

It is now only neceſſary that the poor Wiſdom of Man do not exalt itſelf againſt GOD, that we ſuffer our Eyes to be opened by Him that made them, and our Lives to be conducted by Him, in whom *we live, move, and have our Being.*

2. As Happineſs is the ſole End of all our Labours, ſo this Revelation aims at nothing elſe.

It gives us right Notions of ourſelves, of our true Good and real Evil; it ſhews us our true Condition, both our Greatneſs and Meanneſs, our Happineſs and Miſery.

Before this, Man was a mere Riddle to himſelf, and his Condition full of Darkneſs and Perplexity; a reſtleſs Inhabitant of a miſerable diſorder'd World, *walking in a vain Shadow, and diſquieting himſelf in vain.*

But this Light has diſperſed the Anxiety of his vain Conjectures. It has brought us acquainted with GOD; and by adding Heaven to Earth, and Eternity to Time, has open'd ſuch a glorious View of Things, as leads Men, even in this World, to a *Peace of* GOD *which paſſeth all Underſtanding.*

3. This Revelation acquaints us, that we have a Spirit within

within us, which was created after the Divine Image; that this Spirit is now in a fallen Condition; that the Body in which it is placed is its Sepulchre, where it is enſlaved to fleſhly Thoughts, blinded with falſe Notions of Good and Evil, and dead to all Taſte of its true Happineſs.

It teaches us, that the World in which we live, is alſo in a diſorder'd irregular State, and curs'd for the Sake of Man; that it is no longer the Paradiſe that God made it, but the Remains of a drowned World, full of the Marks of God's Diſpleaſure, and the Sin of its Inhabitants.

That it is a mere Wilderneſs, a State of Darkneſs, a Vale of Miſery; where Vice and Madneſs, Dreams and Shadows, variouſly pleaſe and torment the ſhort, miſerable Lives of Men.

Devils alſo, and evil Spirits, have here their Reſidence, promoting their Works of Darkneſs, and wandering up and down, ſeeking whom they may devour.

So that a Man, in his natural State, is like a Perſon ſick of Variety of Diſeaſes, knowing neither his Diſtempers nor his Cure, and incloſed in a Place where he can hear, or ſee, or feel, or taſte, of nothing but what tends to inflame his Diſorders.

4. But Chriſtianity puts an End to this State of Things, blots out all the Ideas of worldly Wiſdom, brings the World itſelf to Aſhes, and creates all anew. It calls Man from an animal Life, and earthly Societies, to be born again of the Holy Ghoſt, and be made a Member of the Kingdom of God.

It cruſhes into nothing the Concerns of this Life, condemns it as a State of Vanity and Darkneſs, and leads Man to Happineſs with God in the Realms of Light.

It propoſes the purifying of our Souls, enliven'd with the divine Spirit: It ſets before us new Goods and Evils, and forms us to a glorious Participation of the divine Nature.

This is the one End of Chriſtianity. It does not leave us to grovel on in the Deſires of the Fleſh, to caſt about for worldly Happineſs, and wander in Darkneſs and Exile from God: But the ſole Deſign of it is, to lead us from all Thoughts of Reſt here, to ſeparate us from worldly Tempers, to deliver us from the Folly of our Paſſions, the Slavery of our own Natures, the Power of evil Spirits, and

unite us to GOD, the true Fountain of real Good. This is the mighty Change which Chriſtianity aims at; to reform our whole Natures, renew our Souls in the Image of GOD, and make them the Inhabitants of heavenly and immortal Bodies.

5. The Manner in which it changes our whole State is equally great and wonderful.

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, ſaith our bleſſed LORD; *no Man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*

As all Things were created by the Son of GOD, and *without Him was not any-thing made that was made,* ſo are all Things redeem'd and reſtor'd by the ſame divine Perſon.

As nothing could come into Being without Him, ſo nothing can enter into a State of Happineſs but by Him.

The Dignity of this Redemption at once confounds the Pride, and relieves the Miſery of Man. How fallen muſt he be from GOD, that ſhould need ſo great a Mediator! And on the other hand, how full of Comfort is the Thought that ſo high a Method, ſo ſtupendous a Means ſhould be taken to reſtore him to a State of Peace and Favour with GOD.

6. This is the true Point of View, in which every Chriſtian is to behold himſelf. He is to overlook the poor Projects of this Life, and conſider himſelf as a Creature, thro' his natural Corruption, fallen into a State of endleſs Miſery; but by the Mercy of GOD redeem'd to a Condition of everlaſting Happineſs.

All the Precepts and Doctrines of the Goſpel are founded on thoſe two great Truths, the deplorable Corruption of human Nature, and its new Birth in CHRIST JESUS.

The one includes all the Miſery, the other all the Happineſs of Man.

It is on theſe, that the whole Frame of Chriſtianity is built; forbidding only ſuch Things as faſten us to the Diſorders of Sin, and commanding only thoſe Duties which lead us into the Liberty of the Sons of GOD.

So that if we think and act as Chriſtians, we act ſuitably to theſe Terms of our Condition, fearing and avoiding all the Motions of our corrupted Nature, cheriſhing the ſecret Inſpirations of the Holy Spirit, opening our Minds for the Reception of the Divine Light, and preſſing after all the Perfections of our new Birth.

All

All Christians are continually to behave themselves conformably to this double Capacity. We are to fear, and watch, and pray, like Men that are always on the Brink of eternal Death; and to believe, and hope, labour, and aspire, like Christians that are called to fight the good Fight of Faith, and lay hold on eternal Life.

7. This Knowledge of ourselves makes human Life a State of infinite Importance, placed upon so dreadful a Point, betwixt two such Eternities.

Well might our Saviour say to one that begg'd first to go and bury his Father, *Follow Me, and let the Dead bury their Dead.*

For what is all the Bustle and Hurry of the World but a dead Shew, and its greatest Actors but dead Men, when compar'd with that real Life to which the Followers of CHRIST are redeemed.

Had we been made only for this World, worldly Wisdom had been our highest Wisdom; but seeing we are redeemed to an entirely contrary State, worldly Wisdom is now our greatest Foolishness.

It is now our only Wisdom, to understand our new State, and conduct ourselves by the Principles of our Redemption.

8. The Nature of our Christian Calling is of that Concern, as to deserve all our Thoughts; and is indeed only to be perceived by great Seriousness and Attention of Mind.

The Christian State is an invisible Life in the Spirit of GOD, supported not by sensible Goods, but the spiritual Graces of Faith and Hope: So that Man, busied in earthly Cares and Enjoyments, perceives nothing of this great and heavenly Calling.

The Changes which Christiany maketh in the present State of Things, are all invisible: Its Goods and Evils, which are the only true Standards of our Actions, are not subject to the Knowledge of our Senses.

In GOD *we live, and move, and have our Being*; but how unseen, how unfelt is all this!

CHRIST *is the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World, the true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.* He is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and the End of all Things. The whole Creation subsists in Him and by Him. No Person is in any Favour with GOD, but

by this great Mediator. But how inviſible, how unknown to all our Senſes, is this State of Things!

Chriſtians are Temples of the Holy Ghoſt, conſecrated to GOD, Members of CHRIST's myſtical Body, of his Fleſh and his Bones, receiving Life, Spirit, and Motion from Him their Head.

But our Senſes ſee no farther than our Parents and Kindred according to the Fleſh, and fix our Hearts to earthly Friendſhips and Relations. Well then may this Life be deemed a State of Darkneſs, ſince it thus clouds and covers all the true Appearance of Things, and keeps our Minds inſenſible and unaffected with Matters of ſuch infinite Moment.

9. Would we therefore know our true Condition, we muſt ſearch after *a Life that is hid with* CHRIST *in* GOD. We muſt conſider ourſelves as Parts of CHRIST's myſtical Body, and as Members of the Kingdom of Heaven. In vain do we conſider the Beauty and Strength of our Bodies, our Alliances with Men, and the Diſtinctions of this World; for theſe Things no more conſtitute the State of human Life, than rich *Coffins*, or beautiful *Monuments*, conſtitute the State of the Dead.

We juſtly pity the laſt poor Efforts of human Greatneſs, when we ſee a breathleſs Carcaſe lying in *State*. It appears ſo far from any real Honour, that it rather looks like ridiculing the Miſery of our Nature; but were Religion to form our Judgments, the Life of a proud, voluptuous, ſenſual Man, tho' ſhining in all the Splendor of the World, would give us no higher an Idea of human Dignity, than a poor Corpſe laid in State.

For a Sinner, when glorying in the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, is a more ſhocking Sight of Miſery ridicul'd, than any Pageantry that can expoſe the Dead.

10. We have an Apoſtle's Authority to ſay, that *he who liveth in Pleaſure is dead whilſt he liveth.*

This ſhews us, that when we enquire what our Life is, we muſt think of ſomething higher than the Vigour of our Blood, the Gaiety of our Spirits, or the Enjoyment of ſenſual Pleaſures: Since theſe, tho' the allowed Signs of living Men, are often undeniable Proofs of dead Chriſtians.

When therefore we would truly know what our Life or Happineſs

Happineſs is, we muſt look at nothing that is ſenſible or temporal. We may as well dig in the Earth for Wiſdom, as look at Fleſh and Blood to ſee what we are, or at worldly Enjoyments to find what we want, or at temporal Evils to ſee what we have to fear.

Our bleſſed Saviour put an abſolute End to all Enquiries of this Kind, when He ſaid, *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.* Here our Bodies, and all bodily Enjoyments, are at one Daſh ſtruck out of the Account of Happineſs, and the preſent State of Things made ſo very low and inſignificant, that he who can only deprive us of them, has not Power enough to deſerve our Fear.

We muſt therefore, if we would conceive our true State, our real Good and Evil, look farther than theſe dim Eyes of Fleſh can carry our Views. We muſt, with the Eyes of Faith, penetrate into the inviſible World, the World of Spirits, and conſider our Order and Condition among them; a World which, as St. *John* ſpeaks, *hath no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon, to ſhine in it; for the Glory of* GOD *doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.* For it is there, among eternal Beings, that we muſt take eternal Fellowſhip, or fall into a Kingdom of Darkneſs and everlaſting Miſery.

11. Chriſtianity is ſo noble in its Ends, ſo extenſive in its Views, that it has no leſs Subjects than theſe to entertain our Thoughts. It buries our Bodies, burns the preſent World, triumphs over Death by a general Reſurrection, and opens all into an eternal State.

It never conſiders us in any other Reſpect than as fallen Spirits; it diſregards worldly Diſtinctions, and propoſes nothing to our Fears but eternal Miſery, nothing to our Hopes but endleſs Enjoyment with GOD.

This is the great, the important Condition, in which Chriſtianity hath placed us, above our Bodies, above the World, above Death, to be preſent at the Diſſolution of all Things, to ſee the Earth in Flames, and the Heavens wrapt up like a Scroll; to ſtand at the general Reſurrection, to appear at the univerſal Judgment, and to live for ever, when all that our Eyes have ſeen is paſſed away and gone.

12. Take therefore upon thee a Temper ſuitable to this Greatneſs

Greatneſs of thy Condition. Remember that thou art an eternal Spirit, that thou art but for a few Months or Years in a State of Fleſh and Blood, only to try, whether thou ſhalt be for ever happy with GOD, or for ever miſerable with the Devil.

Thou wilt hear of other Concerns and other Greatneſs in this World. Thou wilt ſee every Order of Men, every Family, every Perſon, purſuing ſome fancied Happineſs, as if the World had not only Happineſs, but a particular Kind of Happineſs, for all its Inhabitants.

But when Thou ſeeſt this, fancy thou ſaweſt all the World aſleep: The Prince no longer a Prince; the Beggar no longer begging; but every Man ſleeping out of his proper State: Some happy, others tormented, and all changing their Condition as faſt as one fooliſh Dream could ſucceed another.

When thou haſt ſeen this, if thou wilt, thou mayſt go to ſleep too, thou mayſt lie down and dream. And this is all; for be as happy as the World can make thee, all is but ſleeping and dreaming: And what is ſtill worſe, it is like ſleeping in a Ship, when thou ſhouldſt be pumping for Life; or dreaming thou art a Prince, when thou ſhouldſt be redeeming thyſelf from Slavery.

13. This is no imaginary Flight of a melancholy Fancy, but the real Nature of Things.

For if thou art that immortal Nature, that fallen Spirit, which Religion teaches us; if thou art to meet Death, Reſurrection, and Judgment, as the Fore-runners of an eternal State; what are the little Flaſhes of Pleaſure, the changing Appearances of worldly Happineſs, but ſo many Sorts of Dreams?

How canſt thou talk of the Advantages of Fortune, the Pleaſures of Food or Apparel, without being in a Dream?

Is the *Beggar* aſleep, when he fancies he is building himſelf fine Houſes? Is the *Priſoner* in a Dream, when he imagines himſelf in open Fields and fine Groves? And canſt thou think thy immortal Spirit is awake, while it is delighting itſelf in Shadows and Bubbles of worldly Happineſs?

For if it be true that Man is upon his Trial; if the Trial is for Eternity; if Life is but a Vapour; what is there that deſerves

deſerves a ſerious Thought, but how to get well out of the World, and make it a right Paſſage to our eternal State?

14. It is the Manner of ſome Countries, in the Burial of their Dead, to put a Staff, and Shoes, and Money, in the Sepulchre along with the Corpſe.

We ſee the Folly and Ignorance of ſuch a poor Contrivance to aſſiſt the Dead; but if we did but underſtand what is Life, we ſhould ſee as much Folly in the poor Contrivances to aſſiſt the Living.

For how many Things do People labour after, break their Reſt and Peace to get, which yet when gotten are of juſt as much real Uſe to them, as a Staff and Shoes to a Corpſe under Ground? They are always adding ſomething to their Life, which is only like adding another Pair of Shoes to a Body in the Grave.

Thou mayſt hire more Servants, new paint thy Rooms, and put on richer Apparel; and theſe will help thee to be happy, as *golden* Staffs, or *painted* Shoes, will help a dead Man to walk.

15. If thou remembreſt that the whole Race of Mankind are a Race of fallen Spirits, that paſs thro' this World as an Arrow paſſeth thro' the Air; thou wilt ſoon perceive, that there is no Wiſdom or Happineſs but in getting away to the beſt Advantage.

If thou remembreſt that this Life is but a Vapour, that thou art in the Body only to be holy, humble, and heavenly-minded, that thou ſtandeſt upon the Brink of Death, Reſurrection, and Judgment, and that theſe great Things will ſuddenly come upon thee like a Thief in the Night, thou wilt ſee a Vanity in the Things of this World, greater than any Words can expreſs.

Do but therefore know thyſelf, as Religion hath made thee known; do but ſee thyſelf in the Light which CHRIST has brought into the World, and then thou wilt ſee that nothing concerns thee, but what concerns an everlaſting Spirit that is going to GOD; and that there are no Enjoyments here that are worth a Thought but ſuch as may adorn thee with that Holineſs without which no Man ſhall ſee the LORD.

16. This is the End of Chriſtianity. It is not a School for the teaching of moral Virtue. It is deeper and more

divine in its Deſigns: It implies an entire Change of Heart, a full Dedication of ourſelves, our Souls and Bodies unto GOD.

Our bleſſed Saviour came into the World, not to make any Compoſition with it, but to put an End to the Deſigns of Fleſh and Blood; and to ſhew us, we muſt either renounce this World to become Sons of GOD, or by enjoying it, take our Portion among damned Spirits.

Chriſtianity is a State of Things that wholly regards Eternity: It knows of no other Goods and Evils but ſuch as relate to another Life.

It is a Kingdom of Heaven that has no other Intereſts in this World, than as it takes Members out of it: And when the Numer of the Elect is complete, this World will be conſumed with Fire, as having no other Reaſon for its Exiſtence, than the furniſhing Members for that bleſſed Society, which is to laſt for ever.

I cannot here omit obſerving the Folly of human Wiſdom, which, full of imaginary Projects, pleaſes itſelf with its laſting Eſtabliſhments in a World doomed to Deſtruction, and which is is to laſt longer than 'till a ſufficient Number is redeemed out of it.

Did we ſee a Number of Animals haſtening to take up their Apartments, and contending for the beſt Places in a Building that was to be beat down as ſoon as its old Inhabitants had got ſafe out, we ſhould ſee a Contention full as wiſe as the Wiſdom of worldly Ambition.

17. That Chriſtianity requires a Change of Nature, is plain from the whole Tenor of the Goſpel.

The Saviour of the World ſaith, *that except a Man be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of* GOD. We are told, that *to as many as received Him, to them He gave Power to become the Sons of* GOD; *which were born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man, but of* GOD.

Theſe Words plainly teach us, that Chriſtianity implies an entire Change of Nature; that as our Birth was to us the Beginning of a new Life, and brought us into a Society of earthly Enjoyments; ſo Chriſtianity is another Birth, that brings us into a Condition altogether as new as when we firſt ſaw the Light: We begin again to be, we enter upon

upon freſh Terms of Life, have new Tempers, new Hopes, and Fears, and an entire Change of every Thing that can be called Good or Evil.

This new Birth is the very Eſſence and Soul of Chriſtianity; it is the Seal of the Promiſes, the Mark of our Sonſhip, the Earneſt of our Inheritance, and the ſure Proof of our Acceptance with GOD.

18. If we would know, what a Change our new Life in CHRIST implies, let us conſider what it is to be born of GOD.

Whoſoever is born of GOD, ſaith the Apoſtle, *doth not commit Sin: For his Seed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of* GOD. *In this the Children of* GOD *are manifeſt, and the Children of the Devil.* And again, *We know that whoſoever is born of* GOD *ſinneth not, but he that is begotten of* GOD *keepeth himſelf, and the wicked One toucheth him not,* 1 John iii. 10. v. 18. The ſame Apoſtle tells us, *Whoſoever is born of* GOD *overcometh the World.* He overcometh all worldly Deſires and worldly Fears. He is crucified unto the World, and the World crucified unto him. He is dead to the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life. And he feareth not them that can kill the Body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

We muſt therefore examine the State of our Minds, and ſee whether we are thus changed in our Natures, thus born again; whether we are ſo ſpiritual as to have overcome the World; ſo holy as that we cannot commit Sin; ſince it is the undeniable Doctrine of Scripture, that the new Birth is as neceſſary to Salvation, as the believing in JESUS CHRIST.

19. We have ſeen two Marks of thoſe that are born of GOD. A third is given us by CHRIST Himſelf: *Love your Enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you; that you may be the Children of your Father which is Heaven.*

Well may a Chriſtian be ſaid to be a *new Creature*, ſince without ſuch a Diſpoſition as this, we cannot be Chriſtians, or Children of our Father which is in Heaven. It is not enough therefore to love our Friends, Benefactors and Relations;

lations; but if we be born of GOD, we love like GOD: We have an univerſal Love, a Tenderneſs for all Mankind, imitating that Love which would that *all Men ſhould be ſaved.*

GOD *is Love; and as he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in* GOD, ſo he that dwelleth not in Love dwelleth not in GOD. It is impoſſible to be a true Chriſtian, and an Enemy at the ſame Time. Mankind hath no Enemy but the Devil, and thoſe who are of the ſame Spirit.

20. There is perhaps no Duty more contrary to Fleſh and Blood than this; but it is eaſy to thoſe that are born of GOD.

For, take but away earthly Goods and Evils, and you take away all Hatred and Malice; for they are the only Cauſes of thoſe baſe Tempers.

Let us here a while contemplate the Heighth and Depth of Chriſtian Holineſs, and that Godlike Spirit which it implies! And this alone might convince us, that to be Chriſtians, we muſt be born again; we muſt ſo change our very Natures, as to have no Deſire in our Souls, but that of being like GOD.

And 'till we rejoice and delight only in GOD, we cannot have this Love to our Fellow-Creatures.

We may therefore learn from this, as well as from what was obſerv'd before, that Chriſtianity does not conſiſt in doing no Harm, nor in doing Good, (as it is call'd) nor yet in any particular moral Virtues, as ſome idly ſuppoſe; but in an entire Change of our Hearts, of all our natural Tempers, and a Life wholly devoted to GOD.

21. The ſame Doctrine is farther taught by our bleſſed Saviour, when ſpeaking of little Children, He ſaith, *Suffer them to come unto Me; for of ſuch is the Kingdom of* GOD. Luke xviii. 16.

If we are not reſolved to deceive ourſelves, if we have not Eyes that ſee not, and Ears that hear not, we muſt perceive that theſe Words imply ſome mighty Change in our Nature.

Now the peculiar Condition of Infants is ſuch, that they have every Thing to learn; they are to be taught by others, what they are to hope and fear, and wherein their proper Happineſs conſiſts.

And

And in this Senſe firſt we are to become as little Children, to be as tho' we had every Thing to learn, and ſuffer ourſelves to be taught, what we are to chuſe, and what we are to avoid; to pretend to no Wiſdom of our own, but be ready to be taught of GOD, the only Way of purſuing that only Happineſs which GOD in CHRIST propoſes to us; and to accept it with ſuch Simplicity of Mind as little Children, who have nothing of their own to oppoſe it.

22. But now, is this Infant Temper thus eſſential to Chriſtianity? Does the Kingdom of GOD conſiſt only of thoſe that have it? This then is another undeniable Proof that Chriſtianity implies a *new Creature*; ſuch as having renounced the Prejudices of Life, the Maxims of human Wiſdom, gives itſelf with a Childlike Submiſſion and Simplicity, to be entirely governed by the Doctrines and Spirit of CHRIST. Craft and Policy, ſelfiſh Cunning, proud Abilities and vain Endowments, have no Admittance into this holy State of Society with CHRIST in GOD. The Wiſdom of this World, the Intrigues of Life, the Deſigns of Greatneſs and Ambition, lead to another Kingdom. He that follows CHRIST muſt be emptied of this vain Furniture, and put on the meek Ornament of infant and undeſigned Simplicity.

Where is the Wiſe? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Diſputer of this World? Hath not GOD *made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this World?*

If we will partake of the Wiſdom of GOD, we muſt judge of this World, and its moſt boaſted Gifts, as the Wiſdom of GOD judgeth of them; we muſt deem them Fooliſhneſs, and with undivided Hearts labour after one Wiſdom, one Happineſs, in being entirely devoted to GOD.

23. From all theſe Conſiderations it appears, that Chriſtianity implies a *new Nature*, and a Life entirely devoted to GOD.

Now if this be Chriſtianity, it may ſerve to inſtruct two Sorts of People:

Firſt, Thoſe who are content with an outward Religion; thoſe whoſe Chriſtianity lies only in an outward Decency and Regularity of Life.

I don't mean, thoſe who are inſincere or hypocritical; but

but all thoſe who are content with outward Religion; all who are content with any-thing ſhort of that inward Holineſs, that Newneſs of Heart and Spirit which the Goſpel deſcribes.

They ſhould conſider, that Charity, Chaſtity, Sobriety and Juſtice, may be practis'd without Chriſtianity. A Jew, a Heathen, may be (what you call) charitable and temperate; but to make theſe Parts of Chriſtianity, they muſt proceed from a Heart truly turned to GOD, that is full of an infant Simplicity, that is crucified with CHRIST, that is born again of the Spirit, that has overcome the World. Temperance or Juſtice, without this Turn of Heart, may be the Temperance of a Jew or a Heathen: But it is not Chriſtian Temperance or Juſtice, 'till it proceeds from a Chriſtian Spirit. Could we do and ſuffer all that CHRIST Himſelf did or ſuffer'd, yet if it was not all done in the ſame Temper, in the Spirit of CHRIST, it would profit us nothing.

24. A Chriſtian is ſober, charitable, and juſt, upon the ſame Principles, and with the ſame Spirit that he receives the holy Communion, as Acts of Obedience to GOD, and as ſo many Inſtances of an Heart truly devoted to GOD.

A Chriſtian is ſober, not only ſo far as ſuits with a regular Life, but ſo as becomes one that is born of the Holy Spirit, that is one with CHRIST, who dwelleth in GOD and GOD in him.

He is charitable, not only ſo far as ſuits with his natural Temper, and with good Eſteem among Men; but in ſuch a Meaſure as is ſuitable to the Doctrines and Spirit of the Goſpel.

For indeed, neither Charity, nor Temperance, nor Juſtice, nor any other Virtues (as they are call'd) are Parts of Chriſtian Holineſs, 'till they ſpring from Holineſs of Heart, from the Mind that was in CHRIST.

This is what cannot be too much conſidered by thoſe whoſe Religion has made no Change in their Hearts; who fancy themſelves Chriſtians, only becauſe of the Regularity of their Lives, altho' they have never experienced a Renewal in the Spirit of their Minds, after the Image of Him that created them; who pray without Devotion, give

Alms

Alms without Charity, and are Chriſtians without the Spirit of Chriſtianity.

25. Secondly, This Doctrine may ſerve to inſtruct thoſe who are convinced, they have been hitherto Strangers to Religion.

Some People, who are aſham'd of their paſt Lives, and begin to look toward Religion, think they have done enough, when they have reform'd the outward Courſe of their Lives, when they have left off their groſs Vices and Follies, or are grown careful of ſome particular Duties or Virtues.

Thus, a Man who had been a Drunkard many Years, thinks he has made a ſufficient Change by becoming temperate: Another imagines he is in a very good and ſafe State, becauſe he does not neglect the public Worſhip as he uſed to do: A Lady fancies ſhe lives enough to GOD, becauſe ſhe has left off Plays, and lives more at Home than formerly.

But ſuch People ſhould conſider, that Chriſtianity does not conſiſt in the Fewneſs of our Vices; no, nor in any one particular Virtue, nor yet in the outward Amendment of our Lives: But in ſuch a thorough Change of Heart, as makes the Love of GOD the Spring, and Meaſure, and Rule of all our Tempers and Actions.

26. It is a miſerable Error, to think we are Chriſtians, becauſe we are leſs vain or covetous, more ſober and decent in our Behaviour than we uſed to be. Yet this is the Caſe with many, who think they are well, becauſe they are not ſo bad as they were; becauſe they are reformed from outward Wickedneſs; not conſidering how thorough a Change, how entire a Reformation of Heart as well as Life Chriſtianity implies.

But let ſuch People remember, that they who thus meaſure *themſelves by themſelves are not wiſe*. Let them remember that they are not Diſciples of CHRIST, 'till they have, like Him, *offered their whole Soul and Body as a reaſonable, lively Sacrifice to* GOD; that they are not Members of CHRIST's myſtical Body, 'till they are united unto Him by a *new Spirit*; that they have not enter'd into the Kingdom of GOD, 'till they have enter'd into an *infant Simplicity* of Heart, 'till they are ſo born of GOD as *not to*

commit

commit Sin, ſo full of an heavenly Spirit as to have overcome the World.

Let them remember, *He that is in* CHRIST *is a new Creature*; and that nothing ſhort of this will avail before GOD; nothing leſs than the entire Renewal of the Soul in Righteouſneſs and all true Holineſs. Let them remember, that there is no Religion that will ſtand us in any Stead, but that which is in the Converſion of the Heart to GOD; when all our Tempers are holy, heavenly, divine, ſpringing from a Soul that is *born again* of the Spirit, that is full of divine Love, and tends with one full Bent to a Perfection and Happineſs in the Enjoyment of GOD.

27. Therefore let us look carefully to ourſelves, and conſider what Manner of Spirit we are of: Let us not think our Condition ſafe, becauſe we are of this or that Church or Perſuaſion, or becauſe we are ſtrict Obſervers of the outward Offices of Religion. For we cannot but ſee, theſe are Marks that belong to more that belong to CHRIST. All are not His, *that propheſy*, or even *caſt out Devils, and work Miracles in his Name:* Much leſs thoſe who with corrupt Minds and worldly Hearts, are only *baptized in his Name.*

If Religion has raiſed us into a *new World*; if it has filled us with *new Ends* of Life; if it has taken Poſſeſſion of our Hearts, altered the whole Tune of our Minds, and chang'd the whole Stream of our Affections; if it has given us *new Joys and Griefs, new Hopes and Fears*; if all Things in us are become new; if *the Love of* GOD *is ſhed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghoſt given unto us*, and this *Spirit beareth Witneſs with our Spirits that we are the Children of* GOD: Then we are Chriſtians, not in Name only, but in Truth; then we do believe in the Holy JESUS, and we ſhall *rejoice in the Day of* CHRIST, *that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

FINIS.